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BECKMANN

MAX BECKMANN

RECENT WORK

OCTOBER 18—NOVEMBER 5, 1949

BUCHHOLZ GALLERY

CURT VALENTIN

32 EAST 57TH STREET • NEW YORK

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MAX BECKMANN

from LETTERS TO A WOMAN PAINTER

I must refer you to Cezanne again and again. He succeeded in creating an exalted Courbet, a mysterious Pissarro and finally a powerful, new pictorial architecture in which he really became the last old master, or I might better say he became the first "new master" who stands synonymous with Piero della Francesca, Uccello, Grunewald, Orcagna, Titian, Greco, Goya and Van Gogh. Or, looking at quite a different side, take the old magicians, Hieronymous Bosch, Rembrandt, and as a fantastic blossom from dry old England, William Blake, and you have quite a

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nice group of friends who can accompany you on your thorny way, the way of escape from human passions into the fantasy palace of art.

Don't forget nature through which Cezanne, as he said, wanted to achieve the classical. Take long walks and take them often, and try your utmost to avoid the stultifying motor car which robs you of your vision just as the movies do or the numerous motley newspapers. Learn the forms of nature by heart so you can use them like the musical notes of a composition. That's what these forms are for. Nature is a wonderful chaos to be put into order and completed. Let others wander about, entangled and color blind in old geometry books or in problems of higher mathematics. We will enjoy ourselves with the forms that are given us: a human face, a hand, the breast of a woman or the body of a man, a glad or sorrowful expression; the infinite seas, the wild rocks, the melancholy language of the black trees in the snow, the wild strength of spring flowers and the heavy lethargy of a hot summer day when Pan,

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our old friend, sleeps and the ghosts of midday whisper. This alone is enough to make us forget the grief of the world, or to give it form. In any case, the will to form carries in itself one part of the salvation for which you are seeking. The way is hard and the goal is unattainable; but it is a way.

Nothing is further from my mind than to suggest to you that you thoughtlessly imitate nature. The impression nature makes upon you in its every form must always become an expression of your own joy or grief, and consequently in your formation of it, it must contain that transformation which only then makes art a real abstraction.

But don't overstep the mark. Just as soon as you fail to be careful you get tired, and though you still want to create, you will slip off either into thoughtless imitation of nature, or into sterile abstractions which will hardly reach the level of decent decorative art.

Enough for today, my dear friend. I think much of you and your work, and from my heart wish you power and strength to find and follow the good way. It is very hard with its pitfalls left and right. I know that. We are all tightrope walkers. With them it is the same as with artists, and so with all mankind. As the Chinese philosopher Lao-tse says, we have "the desire to achieve balance, and to keep it."

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Cat. 24-27

700 SD

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CATALOGUE

OILS

1 Dream Theater
1936. 23¾ x 33¾"

2 Cable Car
1937. 31¾ x 19¾"

3 Dancer
1937. 47½ x 31½"

4 Rug Merchant
1946. 76¾ x 37¼"

5 Jupiter
1947. 71 x 25½"

6 Baccarat
1947. 47 x 39¼"

7 Nice (Boulevard des Anglais)
1947. 31¼ x 35¼"

8 Still Life and Profile
1948. 42¾ x 30¾"

9 Souvenir of Chicago
1948. 42¾ x 30¾"
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Pulitzer, Jr.

10 Portrait of Quappi
1948. 42¾ x 31"
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Louchheim

11 Spring Landscape
1948. 31 x 36"

12 Lady with Veil
1948. 25¼ x 20"

13 Sleeping Woman
1948. 31 x 36"

14 Woman with Cat
1948. 29 x 21"

15 Blue Iris
1948. 25 x 25"

16 The Boat
1948. 55 x 76"

17 Portrait of L. P.
1949. 25¼ x 20"
Lent anonymously

18 Portrait of M. D. May
1949. 30 x 20"
Lent by Mr. Morton D. May

19 Portrait of Edith
1949. 23¾ x 15½"
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. George Rickey

20 Prodigal Son
1949. 39 x 47"

21 Portrait of Fred Conway
1949. 25¼ x 20¼"

22 Beginning. Triptych
1949. center panel: 69 x 59"
side panels: 65 x 33¼"

23 Man in the Dark
1934. Bronze. 22½" high

DRAWINGS

24 Rodeo
1949. 23½ x 17¾"

25 Mountain
1949. 23½ x 17¾"

26 Women Fishing
1949. 23½ x 17¾"

27 Bird Play
1949. 23½ x 17¾"

28 Self Portrait with Fishing Pole
1949. 23½ x 17¾"

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Grateful acknowledgment is made to Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Louchheim, Mr. Morton D. May, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Pulitzer, Jr. and Mr. and Mrs. George Rickey

Covan: Selfportrait with Fishing Pole. 1949